



N.J. Victims of Crime Compensation Board

When it seems no one cares, we do!

Quarterly Newsletter

Vol.1 Issue 2
July 1, 2001

Crime Victims' Rights Week Summit 2001

"Reach for the Stars" was the national theme of this year's commemoration of Crime Victims' Rights Week, and New Jersey's second annual summit which was held at the Sheraton at Eatontown, NJ on April 24, certainly demonstrated this state's shining efforts to address the needs of victims. Six workshops were presented in the first morning session and then repeated in the second session before the awards luncheon.

The workshops covered issues of privacy of victims, the death penalty, the socio-economics of crime, involving the victim in the criminal justice system, civil remedies for victims of crime, and the responsibility of the entertainment business regarding violence, crime and crime victims.

At the luncheon, the Equal Justice Award, which is awarded to a legislator who has sponsored important victim legislation, was presented to Assemblywoman Rose Heck (R-38th District.) The Victim Service Award was presented to Tom Keevey, Assistant Chief of the State Office of Victim Witness Advocacy for his years of service above and beyond the duties of his office.

The new "Reach for the Stars" Lifetime Achievement Award was created to give special recognition for individual effort on behalf of crime victims in New Jersey and throughout the nation. This award was presented to Sandra McGowan, Morris County Victim-Witness Coordinator and board member of NOVA (National Organization for Victim Assistance.)

A onetime award for a judge whose lifetime record demonstrates an unwavering commitment to balance the scales of justice was presented to former State Supreme Court Justice Marie Garibaldi, particularly for her strong support of the Constitutional Amendment (Article 1, Paragraph 22) which guarantees the rights of victims in the criminal justice system.

The keynote speaker was Marlene Young, Ph.D., J.D., Executive Director of N.O.V.A. Dr. Young is also the Vice President of the World Society of Victimology, past treasurer of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, co-chair of the Victim Services Committee of the International Association Of Chiefs of Police, and a member of the Victims Committee of the American Bar Association. She was a founding board member of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children.

Dr. Young's enthusiastic pride in the strides that have been made in victim's rights and services was matched by her challenge to all present to continue to meet the challenge of reaching all victims with the services they need and assuring them all the rights possible to equalize the status of offender and victim in the criminal justice system.

What's New?

* The VCCB paid its first catastrophic injury compensation claim in May. The claimant had been previously awarded a maximum \$25,000. We were able to help pay for new leg and foot prosthetics with the additional catastrophic injury compensation.

* The first year of radio ads for the VCCB is complete. The ads have been on every New Jersey radio station. This fiscal year, we will have a new series of ads which will be on Shadow Traffic reports around the state.

* Three Commissioners and three Supervisors attended the Eastern Regional Conference of the National Association of Crime Victims Compensation Boards held in Newport, Rhode Island in early May. Representatives of fourteen Eastern states engaged in excellent round table discussions on Funding Sources, Media Pressure, New Compensable Items, and Large Scale Crisis Response.

Feel free to reproduce any article in this newsletter.



Retired State Supreme Court Justice Marie Garibaldi, author of landmark majority decision based on the Constitutional Amendment.

Let's Look at a Typical Claim

What can the VCCB provide in the case of a homicide? This fictional claim will demonstrate the many ways that the VCCB can help the family of a homicide victim.

Juan and his brother, Ricardo, have been working in this country for three years, sending money back home to Puerto Rico to help support their mother and five siblings. One night, Juan was followed home by a man who mistakenly thought Juan was the man with whom his wife was having an affair. The man doesn't give Juan a chance - within ten minutes Juan is bleeding to death on the floor and the stranger is gone. Ricardo comes home an hour later to find his brother dead.

Ricardo calls the police, the police call the prosecutor's office, the Victim Witness Coordinator contacts the VCCB. The VCCB immediately contacts a crime scene clean-up company and pre-authorizes the work to clean up the blood on the floor and walls in Juan's and Ricardo's apartment. The Board will also pay for Ricardo to stay in a hotel until the clean-up is completed.

The cost of the funeral, including the cost of transporting the body back to Puerto Rico (up to \$5,000 for incidents after 7/1/01) will also be pre-approved the Board. The VCCB will pay up to \$200 for Ricardo's transportation to Puerto Rico for the funeral. Based on his employer's verification of wages, loss of support from Juan can be paid to his mother for a period of up to 48 months. If counseling is sought, the counseling unit of the VCCB will work with the mental health provider in Puerto Rico to verify and pay counseling bills for Juan's mother and all his siblings. It is only a start, but it is the VCCB's mission to help get the victim's family back to a place where they can function again and move forward with their lives.

State of NJ
Victims of Crime Compensation Board
50 Park Place
Newark, NJ 07102



Commissioner's Corner

By Chairman James K. O'Brien

The Open Public Records Act passed by the Senate last month is now before the Assembly. If passed, it will affect every citizen in the state and the way that government does business.

The measure is far-reaching with almost no exclusions of information gathered by governments on municipal, county and state levels. Those opposed to the bill would be hard pressed to give viable reasons why this bill should go down to defeat in the Assembly. For, after all, if you think about it, it was the people's tax dollars that enabled the government to amass these records. This means that they are the people's documents, not the "government's".

Even the Constitution guarantees the right to public access. However, that same document also guarantees the right to privacy and thus the battle lines were drawn.

Our victims' claim files became the focal point of this dispute which generated a number of negotiating sessions with the VCCB arguing that the victims have gone through enough and are trying to rebuild their lives. To allow anyone to snoop into their personal lives through these files only victimizes them again.

Befittingly, an agreement was reached between the VCCB and the NJ Press Association the morning of the Crime Victims' Rights Summit, that will protect the files of more than 65,000 victims.

Whether or not this bill becomes law, the VCCB took no chances and acted independently by declaring all victims' files confidential through amendments to our administrative code passed by the Board in April.